CREATOR
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MOUNTAINS THAT HUMBLE

Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.
Jeremiah 32:17 NASB

What would Earth be like without lofty mountains? And why are we drawn to their splendor? While I was a college student in central Illinois, I longed to see something taller than a stalk of corn! Whether we know it or not, we all want a taste of our Creator's majesty. Beneath the cloud-piercing crowns of mountaintops, we are put in our proper place before God (Isaiah 40:12-17). The mountain ranges of the world remind us that we are small and that our God is great; they properly proclaim to the world, ***"God lovingly humbles all people!"***

We might then ask, "How exactly were the towering heights and sunken valleys of our planet created?" In answer to this query, we can only give an educated guess, since no person stood with God as His Spirit carved the surface of the earth (Job 38:4).

One possible response to our question is that "mountain [ranges] show evidence of enormous forces which have folded, faulted, and generally deformed large sections of the earth's crust."[1]

1 Tarbuck, Edward J. & Lutgens, Frederick K., *Earth Science* 5th Edition (Merrill Publishing Co., Columbus OH 1988), p. 216.

That's not a bad answer. But ***we can never know exactly how*** our Lord Jesus made mountains—by pushing, pulling, squeezing, lifting... whatever (Job 38:14). It is interesting to consider, though!

If one day we found a large crater in an open field, we might wonder how it came to be. Did a meteor plunge into Earth? Is the crater the result of a man-made explosion, like dynamite? Is it a sink hole? Did someone dig in the ground? We could then explore the crater and find clues to its origin.

We can study mountains in a similar way. As we investigate, we can get hints at how Jesus created the vast ranges of the world—piercing peaks that call us to stand in awe of His limitless power (Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 65:6)!

CHRIST'S POWER IN CREATION

However God did it, it's obvious that He applied titanic force to make mountains, working against the relentless pull of gravity, which tries to make everything on Earth flat.

Let me give you an example of the force

needed to shape mountains. On May 18, 1980, the stratovolcano Mount St. Helens erupted. More than one cubic mile (four cubic kilometers) of rock and ash were ejected from it. The immense energy of this volcanic explosion has been estimated to be equivalent to one atomic bomb exploding ***every second for eight hours straight!*** When Mount St. Helens finished erupting at the end of the day, it was reduced in elevation from 9,677 feet (2,950 m) to 8,365 feet (2,550 m), leaving a humongous crater on the north face of the mountain almost a mile in diameter. Yet, this great show of force is tiny compared to the power God used to create all mountains!

He who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.
Psalm 104:32

THE ART OF MAKING MOUNTAINS

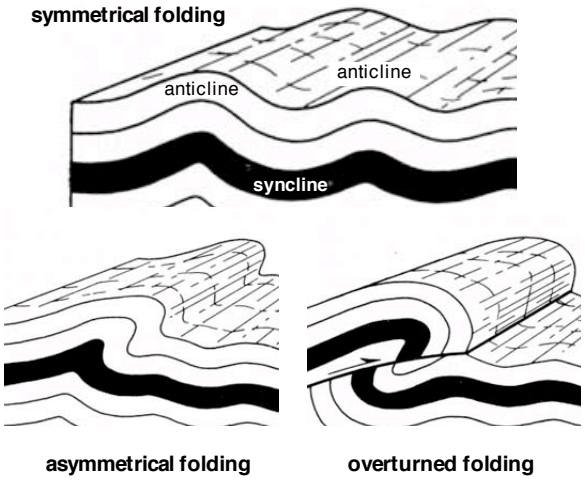
We might compare Christ's shaping of Earth's surface to the joyful Japanese art of ***origami***. (Coincidentally, the science of mountain formation is called "***orogenesis!***"[2]) With great wisdom and strength, nature's Craftsman fashioned some mountains by bending the earth's crust, as one would fold paper by pushing two ends of a sheet together on a flat tabletop. There are thus some places on Earth where it appears that God squeezed the crust together, making wrinkles.

Folding of rock at Mt. Kidd, Alberta, Canada

2 Orogenesis is Greek for "mountain formation" (oros + genesis).

Jesus formed other mountains by cutting[3] the crust into pieces, then fitting them back together. And often—it seems—He used both "creasing" and "piecing" to skillfully sculpt mountain ranges.

Through His Son, God shaped the world with great precision and force. Geologists (scientists who study rocks, minerals, and mountains) call this creasing action "***folding***," and the breaking and shifting of Earth's crust "***faulting***."



TYPES OF MOUNTAINS

There are four basic types of mountains:
1) volcanic mountains[4]
2) folded mountains
3) upwarped mountains (a type of folding)
4) fault-block mountains.

Jesus fashioned the largest mountains of the world by bending the earth's crust. ***Folded mountains*** include the ***Himalayas*** of Asia, the ***Alps*** in Europe, the ***Urals*** in Russia, and the ***Appalachians*** of North America.

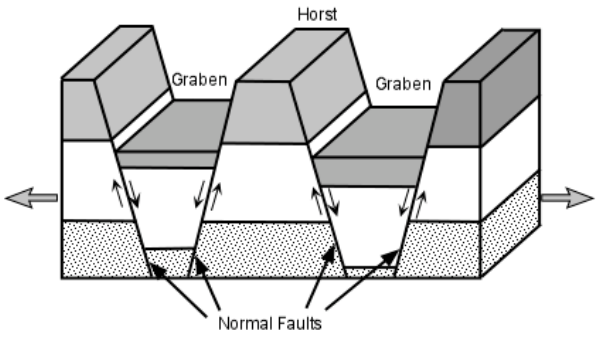
Apparently some folded mountains were created when Christ lifted the earth's crust from below—like pushing your fist upward from under a blanket (the blanket representing the Earth's crust). This type of folding produces ***upwarped*** or ***dome mountains***. The ***Black Hills*** of South

3 Traditional Japanese origami permits the cutting as well as the folding of paper.
4 Read about volcanoes in the Sep./Oct. 1994 issue of ***CREATOR.***

Dakota are thought to have been formed this way.

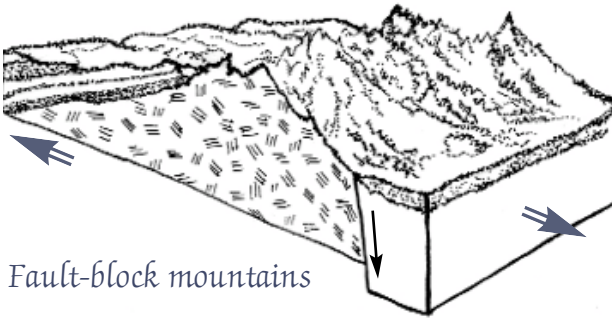
Where Earth's crust has been pressed down by the Lord, it's known as a ***basin*** (the opposite of an upwarped mountain or dome). The city of London lies in just such a crustal depression.

Many of the hilly and mountainous landscapes of the world appear to have been created when our Lord Jesus cracked or cut the earth (known as ***faulting***) by stretching its crust apart. He then moved great blocks of rock one against the other (***shifting***), forming ***fault-block mountains***. Some fault-block mountains are called ***horsts*** and ***grabens*** (pronounced GRAH - bins).



Earth's crust being stretched apart

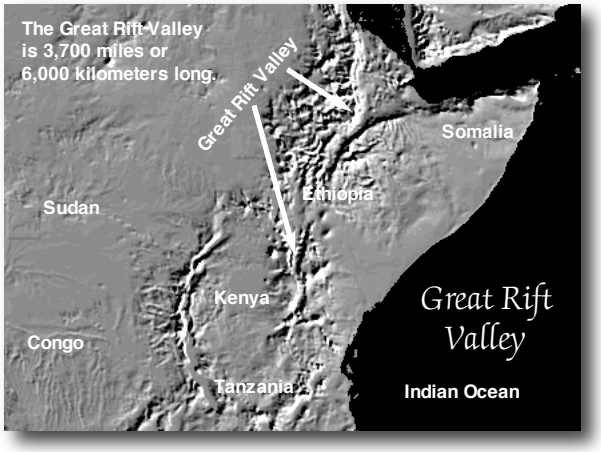
A different type of fault-block mountain occurs when its blocks become tilted as the result



Fault-block mountains

of faulting. The ***Grand Tetons*** of Wyoming and the ***Sierra Nevada*** in California both represent this type of fault-block mountain.

The Great Rift Valley of East Africa and the Rhine Valley in Germany are places where God pulled apart the earth's crust, fashioning a number of large grabens (rift valleys) and horsts (rift mountains). The Dead Sea valley of Israel is also thought to be a large graben.



In other cases—the ***Rocky Mountains*** of North America for instance—mountain ranges represent a large collection of folded mountains, fault-block mountains, upwarped mountains, and volcanoes.

• • •

"So how did God make the mountains?" echoes mysteriously within the halls of science. We simply don't know. The more important questions are: "What do mountains teach us about God's character, and how should we respond?" Our Creator is great; we are miniscule

and we ought to live meekly before Him! And through God's Son, Jesus, we can ***humble ourselves*** and truly enjoy the majestic presence of the Almighty in our lives:

> *For this is what the High and Lofty One says—He who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15).*

❑

"The Price of Glory"

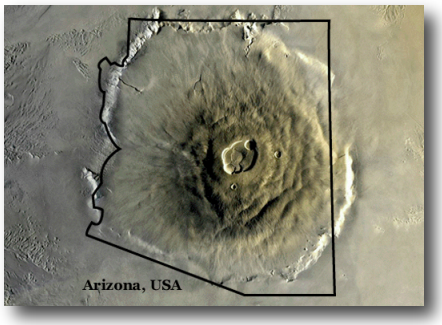
Since 1922, over 200 men and women have lost their lives trying to scale Mount Everest, in the Khumbu Himal region of Nepal. At 29,035 feet (8,850 meters), it stretches into the sky as the world's tallest mountain. The odds are one-in-six that a climber will never return alive!

The humbling effects of Mount Everest include sub-zero temperatures, ferocious winds over 100 mph (160 kph), deadly storms and avalanches, and a critical lack of life-giving oxygen (above 25,000 feet or 7,620 meters, mountain air has only one-third of the oxygen that air at sea level has).

Christ uniquely publishes His matchless beauty using mountains. Drawing close to this kind of majesty through climbing, however, comes at a high price—it is often met with extreme hardship. God enlists all mountains to humble us and display His glory, but none more, it seems, than Everest!

AMAZING HEIGHTS

Olympus Mons—a massive volcano on Mars—dwarfs all other mountains in the Solar System. Piercing the Martian atmosphere at an

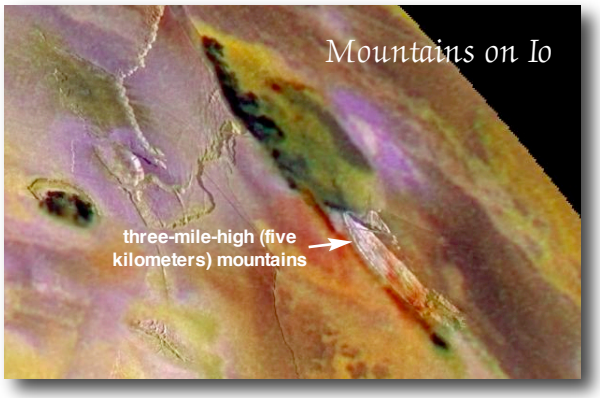


The above shows an actual photo of Olympus Mons on Mars, with a map of Arizona, in the United States, superimposed onto it.

astounding altitude of nearly 17 miles (88,580 feet or 27 kilometers), it is three times higher than Mount Everest and 2.6 times the height of Mauna Kea in Hawaii. There are five mountains on Mars (including Olympus Mons) that are taller than Mount Everest!

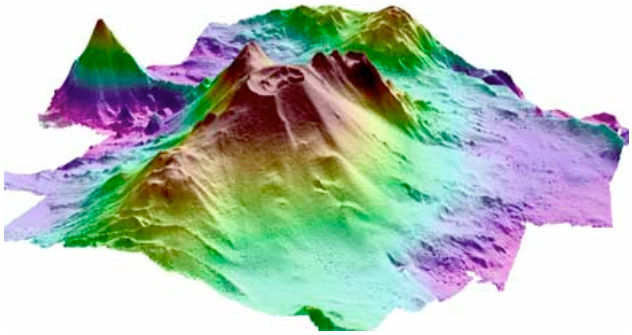
But Mars is not the only planet to sport geological giants. Using radar mapping, we have discovered a mountain on Venus—Maxwell Montes—stretching seven miles (11 kilometers) above the Venusian landscape.

Jupiter's beautiful and eerie moon, Io, also features many peaks and volcanoes. Some are believed to stand 52,000 feet tall (16 kilometers).



Back on Earth, God has hidden most of His mountainous masterpieces from our view. Did you know that under the great oceans of our world Jesus placed tens of thousands of mountains that each rise at least 3,280 feet (1,000 meters) above the seafloor? Submerged mountains are called ***seamounts*** and nearly one-half of them reside in the Pacific Ocean alone.

Mauna Kea of the Hawaiian Islands is actually the highest mountain on Earth—that is, if we measure it from the seabed to its peak. Towering at 33,476 feet (10,203 meters), it easily surpasses the height of Mt. Everest by almost one mile (1,355 meters)!

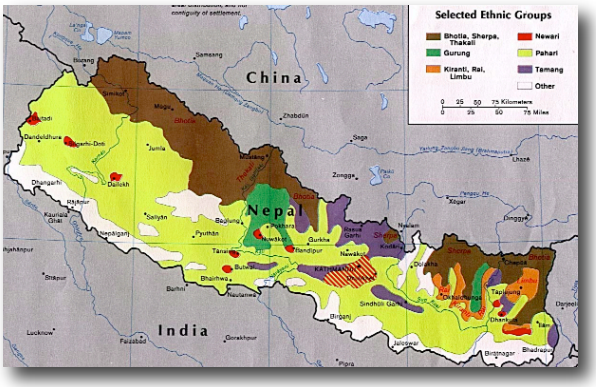


Computer-generated picture of an underwater mountain or seamount

Seamounts provide a safe haven for hundreds of species of plants, invertebrates, fish, birds, and marine mammals such as dolphins. Special currents that Christ creates around seamounts saturate the water with nutrients, and plankton populations are dense attracting a large number of fish. (Plankton consists of tiny algae and microscopic animals that form the diet of many creatures in this complex ocean food web.) Tuna, sardines, orange roughy, and sharks all find shelter and sustenance near seamounts.

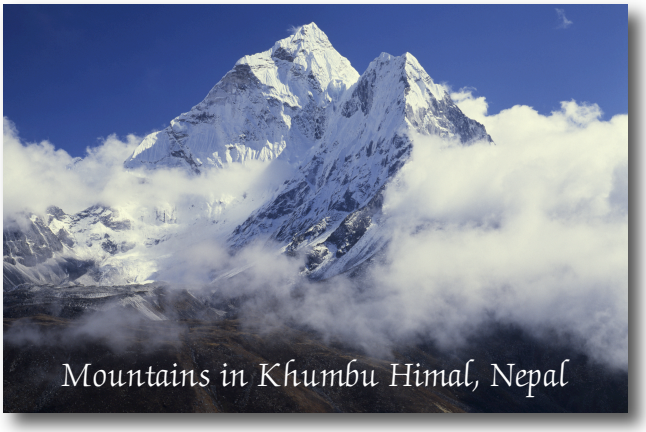
The mountains on land harbor no less diversity of life. And ten percent of the people in the world call the mountainous regions of Earth—which make up twenty percent of our planet's surface—their home.

An unbelievable number of different people groups, for example, live in the tiny mountainous country of Nepal alone—334 at last count![1] Why so many cultures and languages? Steep mountains,



like the Himalayas,[2] act as natural barriers to communication and travel. Of these 334 difficult-to-reach peoples, an estimated 310 (93% of all groups) have never heard about Jesus Christ. Reaching people with the Gospel in this corner of the world remains very challenging—***it's the high price for Glory!***

The Himalayas form the greatest mountain range on the surface of the Earth. Eighty-eight percent of the world's tallest peaks—over 24,000 feet (7,315 meters)—reside here.



Mountains in Khumbu Himal, Nepal

Mountains possess other-worldly beauty, tenacious life, unseen wonders, and danger—a dim mirror of God's infinite character. And mountains cradle people, people whom Jesus loves. He is, after all, our majestic ***and*** caring Creator! ❑

1 Data and map are courtesy of the Joshua Project.
2 The word "himalaya" comes from two Sanskrit words - ***hima*** which means "snow" and ***alaya*** meaning "abode" or "abode of snow."

THE TWIN PEAKS OF GOD'S GLORY

If I asked you to draw or paint a scene filled with mountains, how would you shade them? Notice that the background mountains in the picture below are lighter than the ones in front.

The farther we get from a mountain peak, the more air or atmosphere we must peer through to see it. Air is like a thick plate of glass.

In a sense, this also applies to our understanding of God. The further we are from one of His attributes, the harder it is to know Him as He really is. Most people see God as loving, but have difficulty acknowledging His wrath against our sin. In their minds, the mountain of God's hatred for sin is very far away.

On the other hand, we might position ourselves to focus on the looming precipice of God's holiness—with Christ's great love faded into the distance.

Alone, neither view of God is accurate. Only when we behold the full range of God's character can we experience the joy and security of knowing Him as He really is. Our Creator is both terribly holy (Hebrews 12:29) and gently loving (Isaiah 40:11), fearfully unapproachable (Psalm 18:8; 1 Timothy 6:16) and sweetly welcoming (Matthew 11:29). This "twin peak" view of God brings into clarity our Creator's majesty as two infinitely-high mountains standing side by side, neither more distant than the other.

But how can we know God in this way? First, we must recognize that we are sinners and that all our wrongdoing will be punished. Our sins have put an impassable, infinitely-deep gorge between us and God's eternal love. Through Christ alone (John 14:6), however, our sins can be forgiven forever. Jesus—God's Son—lived a perfect life as a man and died a horrible death on a cross in order to absorb the wrath of God against those who trust and believe in Him. Christ could not remain dead but came back to life so that He might show us the full view of His Father's glory (Hebrews 1:3). Only Jesus, who is God, can do this! It is necessary for the Almighty to bring the high peak of His glory down to our level by appearing to us as the man Jesus.

God humbles mankind by revealing His majesty in the towering mountains of His nature. He dwarfs us, yet in His presence we also find great joy. We can only be satisfied in life by fixing our eyes on the Rock that is infinitely higher than all others—Jesus Christ (Psalm 18:2; Hebrews 12:2). In Christ alone we see the Twin Peaks of God's infinite character. Surrender yourself to Him!

"Oh, Father in Heaven, I confess that I have lived my life in rebellion against You, and this is sin. Please forgive me through Your Son, Jesus Christ—through His death on the cross. Jesus, please come into my heart right now. I embrace You as my all-powerful God, my sweet Savior, and my Eternal Life. Show me how to live the way You want me to live, and allow me to see and hear Your praises throughout the universe! In Your name, Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen." ❑

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